

Message Text

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63

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

MMS-01 SR-02 ORM-01 AID-05 SY-05 SCCT-01 EB-07 OMB-01

TRSE-00 (ISO) W

----- 010465

R 142215Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2899

INFO US MISSION GENEVA 643

US MISSION USUN 1066

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SANTIAGO 2266

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: CI, PINT

SUBJ: THE CHURCH, POVERTY, AND ECONOMIC AID

1. SUMMARY: IN PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 11, CATHOLIC BISHOP CAMUS SAID RESTRICTION OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AID TO CHILE PENALIZES CHILEAN PEOPLE. ON HUMAN RIGHTS, SAID THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE OVER THE PAST YEAR. STATED CHURCH- GOC RELATIONS ARE GOOD; THAT CHURCH IS AWARE OF MIR TACTIC TO USE PRIESTS; AND THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER WILL SEE CARDINAL SILVA WHILE IN CHILE. HIS STATEMENTS DO NOT DETRACT FROM PREVIOUS CHURCH CRITICISM OF GOC BUT UPPEAR TO REPRESENT CARDINAL'S STRONG BELIEF THAT GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN GOC AND CHURCH ARE OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. SECRETARY OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE BISHOP CARLOS CAMUS IN PRESS CONFERENCE CONCERNING RECENT BISHOP'S CONFERENCE, MADE NUMBER OF POINTS, WITH EMPHASIS ON CHILE'S CURRENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE WARNED FOREIGN COUNTRIES THAT IN THESE DIFFICULT ECONOMIC MOMENTS, WITH SO MUCH MISERY, MEASURES THAT AFFECT CREDITS TO CHILE

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ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CHILEAN PEOPLE. "BLOCKADES (ECONOMIC)

DO NOT CHASTISE GOVERNMENTS, BUT RATHER PUNISH THE POOREST". CAMUS SAID "IT IS NOT JUST" THAT HUNGER BE USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, AND ADDED THAT LAST YEAR CHURCH ASKED U.S. AND CANADIAN BISHOPS NOT TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC MEASURES AGAINST "CHILEAN PEOPLE" FOR ANY REASON.

3. COMMENTING ON THE CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CHILE, CAMUS SAID THERE HAD BEEN "A CHANGE" IN COMPARISON WITH LAST YEAR BUT DID NOT DEFINE IT. HE REITERATED CHURCH'S POSITION ON DEFENDING MAN AGAINST "VENGEANCE AND UNSUITABLE" (INADECUADOS) MEASURES.

4. CAMUS AFFIRMED THAT CHURCH RELATIONS WITH GOC ARE GOOD AND THAT THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES AND THE CHURCH.

5. HE /CONFIRMED" THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER, IF HE COMES TO CHILE, WILL MEET WITH CHURCH LEADER RAUL CARDINAL SILVA.

6. REFERRING TO TERRORIST MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR) CAMUS SAID THE CHURCH IS AWARE OF MIR STRATEGY TO BRING PEOPLE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE TO PRIESTS. ACCORDING TO PRESS, CAMUS ADMITTED THAT SEVERAL PRIESTS HAD ABUSED THEIR POSITION WITH RESPECT TO CONTACT WITH MIR BUT SAID NUMBER WAS ONLY MINIMAL WHEN COMPARED TO NUMBER OF REAL REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE.

7. CAMUS SAID THE BISHOPS HAD DISCUSSED THE FAMILY PROBLEMS CREATED BY EXPULSION OF CHILEANS TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES WHERE THEY MAY BE UNEMPLOYED. STATED THE CHURCH BELIEVES MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE SEEKING ASYLUM SHOULD REMAIN IN CHILE.

8. CAMUS REVEALED THAT THE CHURCH IS NOW OPERATING OVER 100 "SOUP KITCHENS" TO FEED THE POOR, WITH GOAL OF ESTABLISHING A NEW ONE EVERY DAY. IN THE BEGINNING THEY ATTEMPTED TO FEED THOSE OF SCHOOL AGE, BUT ADULTS ARE NOW INCLUDED.

9. COMMENT: BECAUSE OF BISHOPS' CONCERN FOR CURRENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, CAMUS IN EFFECT SUPPORTED GOC BY HIS COMMENTS ON EFFECTS OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE CUTOFF. ALTHOUGH NOT AN ENDORSEMENT OF GOC POLICY OR AN OFFICIAL CHURCH DECLARATION OF SUPPORT, THIS IS FIRST TIME WE HAVE NOTED CHURCH SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD USE ECONOMIC MEASURE AS PART OF POLITICAL STRATEGY TO FORCE GOC POLICY CHANGE.

10. JUDGING FROM PRESS VERSIONS OF CONFERENCE, CAMUS HANDLED HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE CAREFULLY. PRESUMABLY THE "CHANGE" HE MENTIONED WAS FOR THE BETTER, BUT STATEMENT AGAINST "VENGEANCE AND UNSUITABLE MEASURES" INDICATES CHURCH STILL SEES A PROBLEM. LACK OF SPECIFICS MAY REFLECT CHURCH'S DESIRE TO WITHHOLD COMMENT WHILE DEBATE ON SUBJECT IS GOING ON WITHIN GOC AND CARDINAL'S BELIEF THAT HIS PERSONAL GOOD RAPPORT WITH GOC OFFICIALS WOULD BE JEOPARDIZED BY OPEN CRITICISM. CAMUS HAS BEEN MUCH TOUGHER ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS.

11. CAMUS WAS PRESUMABLY ASKED ABOUT CONTACT BETWEEN PRIESTS AND MIR BECAUSE OF HIS PAST ROLE. NO DOUBT THIS REMAINS A POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKER FOR GOC-CHURCH RELATIONS.

12. CAMUS DEPARTS CHILE ABOUT 16 ON IVP VISIT TO U.S.
POPPER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES, POLITICAL SITUATION, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SANTIA02266
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750130-0776
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750454/aaaabybc.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <10 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE CHURCH, POVERTY, AND ECONOMIC AID
TAGS: PINT, ECON, SHUM, CI, (CAMUS, CARLOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006